

## INTRODUCTION

The last four decades have witnessed an unprecedented growth in our store of accumulated knowledge. This growth has been so rapid that it is often referred to as an explosion, and it is the result of vastly expanded scientific and technological research as well as the response of business and industry, the social sciences, and the humanities to an increasingly complex world.

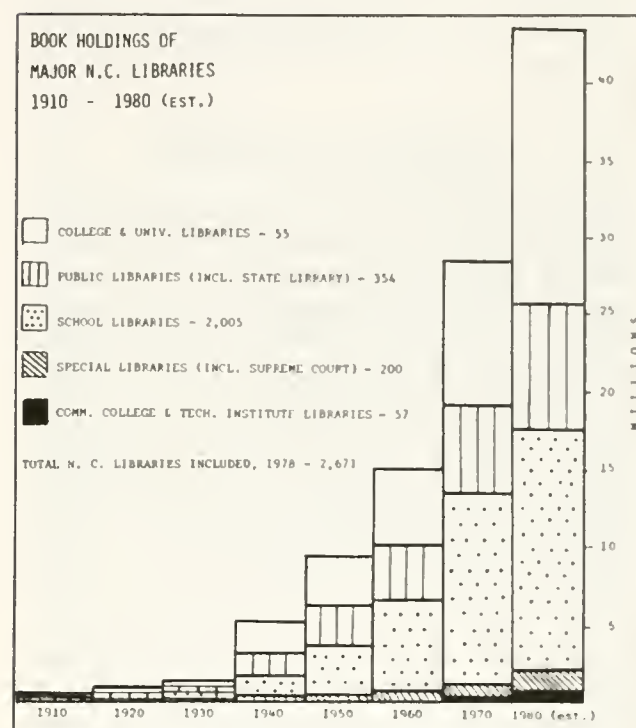
Those most concerned with this explosion, whether they require access to the information or are charged with its management, have watched as the whole information universe has expanded piecemeal, with no overall conception of how best to develop library and information services. It is with the hope of grasping the totality of the field that the Governor's and White House Conferences were called. Before looking at the situation at present, however, it might prove beneficial to sketch briefly North Carolina's library history.

Our library legacy dates from 1701 when the Reverend Thomas Brey sent a collection of books from England to St. Thomas Parish, Bath County. Later in the century and well into the 1800's libraries developed in three areas: the first was private and semiprivate or parish libraries, the second was around the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the many academies throughout the State, and the third at the center of State Government. While often referred to as the "public" library, the governmental State Library (established in 1812) really served primarily State Government and the Legislature even though it contained not only governmental but literary, biographical, historical, and scientific material as well.

The modern era of library development can be traced to the turn of the century. In 1901, for example, the first appropriation was made for books in the public schools. That was the same year that the venerable Louis R. Wilson was appointed Head Librarian at Chapel Hill, and only four years earlier the first tax-supported public library was established at Durham. In 1930, school library development was spurred by the appointment of Mary Peacock Douglas as the State's first Advisor of School Libraries. In addition to library development in the academic, school, and public sectors, special libraries were created to serve North Carolina's industries. Also, special libraries evolved to assist in research, government, and the professions. The last important library sector to develop followed the establishment of the community college and technical institute system in 1963.

It was not until the N. C. Library Commission was established in 1909 that any quantitative measure of

library resources in the State was possible, and that 82 libraries were identified in the State with total book holdings of approximately 370,000 volumes. Of these 82 libraries, only eight contained 10,000 books or more. These were: The University at Chapel Hill, 55,000; The State Library, Raleigh, 40,515; Trinity College (later Duke University), 39,974; Davidson College, 25,000; The Supreme Court Library, 19,216; Goodwill Free Public Library, 12,000; Salem Academy, 11,000; and, Asheville Public Library, 10,000. In the schematic below, one can trace the increase in book holdings of North Carolina's major libraries decade by decade. It illustrates graphically the information explosion.



What the table does not show is that in the past three decades the increase in information contained in nonbook formats (learned journals and other periodicals, technical reports, materials stored on microfilm or other micrographic techniques, and computer databases) has far outstripped increases in book publishing. In our major universities, for example, it is not uncommon for 60 or 70% of the total materials budget to be used for nonbook materials. It has become impossible for any institution to develop a comprehensive collection, and this has led to a number of notable cooperative programs in the State.